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**Statement by Congressman Greg Walden**

**July 26, 2004**

**Subcommittee on Criminal Justice,  
Drug Policy and Human Resources**

**“Fighting Meth in America’s Heartland: Assessing the Impact on Local  
Law Enforcement and Child Welfare Agencies”**

Chairman Souder and members of the subcommittee, thank you for your continued focus on this critical issue and for allowing me the opportunity to share my comments today.

The production, trafficking and abuse of meth have had profound effects all around our nation, particularly in rural areas like Oregon’s Second Congressional District, which stretches through the eastern, southern and central parts of the state. Local agencies and volunteers in Oregon and around the country are fighting the battle against this epidemic everyday, and it is exceedingly important to hear from city and county leaders about the challenges they face in the battle to rid our communities of this terrible drug.

To better understand the impacts of meth on the people of eastern, central and southern Oregon I sponsored a series of seven community town hall forums with local and state stakeholders who are focused on the runaway problem of meth. These forums afforded me an excellent opportunity to learn about counter-drug efforts already underway and to raise awareness about the issue in the communities I represent. The problems meth causes in my rural district are substantial, but the efforts of state and local enforcement agencies, as well as treatment and prevention providers, are truly outstanding. I invite the Chairman and members of the subcommittee to visit Oregon’s Second District to see firsthand the good work underway and how additional federal assistance could be put to work.

I am proud that Oregon has been at the forefront in the fight against meth, implementing innovative strategies and making difficult choices to mitigate the effects of this poison statewide. After hearing requests from law enforcement, the judicial system, families and communities in crisis, the governor and the state legislature have taken decisive action

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that makes it much more difficult to obtain chemicals necessary to cook meth. Specifically, the availability of pseudoephedrine, a key precursor chemical for the production of meth that is readily accessible in over-the-counter decongestants has been significantly controlled.

Since these restrictions were implemented, the number of meth labs and dumpsites secured by law enforcement has fallen substantially as meth cooks have had greater difficulty obtaining precursor chemicals. Law enforcement secured only 119 meth labs and dumpsites in the first half of 2005 compared to 271 in 2004, a reduction of over 56% according to information from the Oregon Department of Justice.

While these results are heartening, it is unfortunate that enacting these sorts of laws limiting access to ingredients in select states will only shift the problem elsewhere, not eliminate it. In light of this, I look forward to continued work with my colleagues from across the country and officials in the administration, including Scott Burns from ONDCP and Joseph Rannazzisi from the DEA who are testifying today, to combat meth by strangling the supply of meth and those precursor ingredients that are diverted to illicit use, on the international market and within our borders.

It is also important to address the many other problems caused by the drug, and that's why I am a cosponsor of a number of federal proposals to increase community awareness, establish treatment options, provide resources to clean up the toxic waste that meth production leaves behind and give law enforcement and the judicial system tools they need to go after those who manufacture and traffic the drug. I will continue to work with the House leadership to see these changes brought into law.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues here and dedicated Oregonians, including the statewide Methamphetamine Task Force—a group of local leaders from law enforcement, treatment, prevention and children's services from around the state—to further develop solutions that reduce availability of the drug in our communities and provide appropriate services for those who are affected. The feedback and suggestions I've received from those on the front lines in this effort has been exceedingly valuable in telling the story of meth's destructive power. While much work remains, by working together at the federal, state and local level we will continue to make progress to rid our communities of this scourge.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman for your continued leadership on this issue. I look forward to working you.